THE CORNER OF MAIN AND COURT...

A TURNING POINT

Doris Sherrow
Social History of Middletown
Peter D. Hall
January 19, 1981
Dedicated to
Daniel Dyer Darling,
Yale, Class of 1936
who joined the people whose lives are sketched
in this paper
on December 1, 1980.
He was my father.
Enlargement of the Barnum Map

Washington Street

Dr. John Osborn

Josiah & Elizabeth Williams

Josiah Williams & Co.

Esther Williams

Bank of the U.S.

J. Hinsdale

New brick stores

Rental housing

COURT ST.
The little squares which represent Middletown's shops and houses are carefully labelled with the owner's name on the 1851 Richard Clark map and the 1859 Walling map. The 1825 H. L. Barnum map of the city district of Middletown displays a comparable degree of detail, but it is artistic rather than literary—the little squares are distinct buildings with minute and probably accurate architectural details. Some houses have rectangular gable windows; some have semi-elliptical gable fan lights. Buildings near the river have long diagonal stairways to their second-story front doors—to avoid freshet damage on the main floor. The gambrel roofed, seven bay (a bay is a door or window opening in the building's facade) Court House, carefully sketched in the corner of the 1790 map in J.B. Beers History of Middlesex County, has seven little window dots across the upper story and three on either side of the slightly longer doorway dot on the lower story—seven bays—on the Barnum map. The roof is shaded to suggest a gambrel roof, and there is even an indication of the raised foundation shown in the 1790 sketch. Unfortunately, there are no names. Except for a few public buildings—the Almshouse, the churches, the Court House, the Military Academy which became Wesleyan University—there is no indication of who lives in each house or what kind of business is carried on in each shop. Rachel Conescu researched and identified structures on both sides of Washington Street from Main Street east to the west edges of Cherry and Lumber Streets; this paper will continue that task, going south on the east side of Main Street to Court Street then east on the north side of Court Street to its end at Bank Street. Of the fifteen structures included in this area, only part of one remains.

Whenever possible, this paper will include inferences about the residents drawn from Barnum's representation of their homes and businesses. The Barnum map is probably accurate in its facade depictions—what other reason would there be to vary so many minute details on these tiny houses—fanlights, door surrounds,
number of chimneys, etc.—if not to convey an accurate representation of the streetscape? The Rev. John Cookson house offers a remarkable example. This house, recently relocated to 61 Main Street by Middletown preservationist John Reynolds III, came from the east side of South Main Street opposite the first Baptist Church building (Middletown Connecticut: Historical and Architectural Resources, form 159). It is a 3-bay, 2½ story, gable-to-street Federal style structure with a gable fanlight and elaborate side and transom lights. On the east side of South Main Street, opposite Barnum's "B. Church" is a 3-bay, 2½ story, gable-to-street house with a fanlight like a pinhead in profile and 1/16" lines outlining the miniscule door—unlike the simple rectangular dots which form the doors of neighboring houses. The amount and type of detail is simply too great to be ignored.

Certain generalizations may be made concerning building styles. Colonial period houses were usually ridge-to-street (the ridge of the roof parallel to the street) and later Federal styles (early 1800's), gable-to-street. These concepts permit some analysis to be made of the 1825 street scape; for example, the 5-bay, 2 story house directly north of the "C" in Court Street is probably Colonial, while its neighbor to the east was probably built in the early 1800's. Impact, the former house appears to have been built by Matthew Talcott around 1740, and the latter, around 1825, by John and Daniel Hinsdale. However, a photograph on file with the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust offers another perspective, whether clarifying or confusing: the Jacob Sebor house on the south-east corner of Main and Washington is a Colonial style, probably built in the 1770's. On the Barnum map however, it appears to be a gable-to-street Federal style; the G.M.P.T. photograph, taken in the late 19th century, shows a Colonial style structure oriented perpendicular to Main Street. Probably it was built that way to face Washington Street, although there is some indication (a gate and a path) that people entered the house through the south side. Many very
early houses faced south in an early utilization of passive solar heating (523 Main Street and 119 High Street, both in Portland, Conn., built 1723 and 1705 respectively). Probably that is not the case with the Sebor house, but the house as pictured by Barnum and photographed shows that not every one of Barnum's gable-to-street structures can be assumed to be a "new" house.

Dr. John Osborn

The first structure south of the Jacob Sebor house appears to be a gable-to-street, side-entry, plain Federal. However the house traces back to James Cornwell, a descendant of the lot's first owner, in the 1770's (MLR 1:43 and 25:70), suggesting that Cornwell may have copied Sebor in setting his house sideways to Main Street, the little door being the so-called "coffin door."

Old houses are ever vulnerable to fire and fashion, so another possibility exists: the structure sketched by Barnum may have been built in the early 1800's either to replace the demolished Cornwell house or to suit the fancy of Soloman and Zenas Cowles (MLR 34:190, 1798-1807), Joseph W. Alsop (MLR 40:244, 1807-1814), or Dr. John Osborn (MLR 45:408, 1814-1825). Osborn, one of the founders of the state Medical Society, was a brilliant but possibly abrasive physician in Middletown from roughly 1760 to 1820. (D.D. Field, Centennial Address 1853; p. 62)

Even before completing his medical studies, he had accompanied the troops to Ticonderoga in 1758 as a medic, only sixteen years old. (He may well have treated this writer's (5 greats) grandfather who served with Gaylord's company and died of wounds in His Majesty's Hospital at Albany in 1760.)

Osborn had an incredible library, occupying three handwritten pages in probate (MPR 13:246-9) and displaying such titles as The Political Censor, Democracy Unveiled, Dialogues of the Dead, Examination of the Episcopal Church pamphlet, Sermon on the Day of Judgment, Electricity, Tristram Shandy, Irish History, Portrait of Calvinism, Short Method with Deists, Physico-theology, A Picture of a Republican Magistrate, Answer to the Declaration of Congress, Common Prayer, Chemistry, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, Gregoire on Negroes, Dryden, Juvenal, AntiJacobian, several collections of poems, War in Disguise, Campaign in Russia,
fourteen books on midwifery, eight on anatomy, seven on fever, six on surgery, two each on nerves, consumption, dropsy, hot climates, and army diseases, and one book each on small pox, cow pox, poisons, jail fever, yellow fever, skin, blood, drowning, diseases of infants, diseases of children, wounds, epidemics, puerperal fever, catarrh, opium, antimony, mercury, lead, tea and seawater. Osborn was an early campaigner for inoculation for small pox, inoculating some 1200 people in the winter of 1777-1778. In his 1820 will, he mentions five children, but Christ Church records suggest that he may have had as many as ten children. Two of his sons became doctors like their father and his father, also Dr. John Osborn (1713-1753). It is uncertain whether Osborn ever practiced from this house. He was in his seventies when he acquired the property—it may have been a retirement place or an income-producing rental property. On the evening of June 7, 1825, he died, aged 87, according to the American Sentinel. His heirs retained the property for at least a decade but his pew in the Episcopal Church (Christ Church) was immediately put up for sale (Middlesex Gazette, Nov. 16, 1825).

The Williamses

Next south of Dr. John Osborn's house are three buildings which may be examined as a group. In 1825 they were (from north to south) the late 1700's Georgian style brick home of Josiah and Elizabeth (Whittlesey) Williams, Josiah's 3 story brick store building, built in 1808, and recently occupied by the Middletown Branch of the Bank of the United States, and Esther (Magill) Williams older Colonial style home. This house probably dated back to the mid-eighteenth century, possibly constructed by the Cornwells. George Philips, who with his father George and his brother Thompson, was an active participant in the West Indies trade until 1794 (D.D. Field, op.cit.) acquired the property in 1773 (MLR 22: 162 and 324) and built the brick house, which appears to be a rather elaborate twin chimney, central hall structure—fashionable by late 18th century standards (note the elaborate doorway) shortly before he sold the property to Arthur Magill in 1794. (MLR 34: 66) Magill lived on Ferry Street.
He probably purchased this property for his daughters Esther and Mary since Esther had married in 1793 and Mary married in 1802. They were already living in their respective houses when his estate was probated. His house on Ferry Street went to his widow and his acquisitions on Main Street were carefully if unequally divided between his two daughters. Mary's husband Josiah Williams was a successful merchant, owning with Magill, the 1808 brick store already. Mary and Josiah received some degree of favoritism, specifically the newer, nicer house and a larger piece of land (not to mention the store). (NPR 10:11) Christ Church records indicate that Josiah and Mary had three children, two boys and a girl, between 1803 and 1810. In 1815 Josiah Williams married Elizabeth Whittlesey, probably meaning that Mary Magill Williams had died and Williams remarried. In the early 1820's Josiah acquired a partner improbably named William Williams. Volume 3 of the Town Votes and Proprietors' Records gave an 1823 reference to a William Williams "of Bermuda" being made a freeholder. Also a Margaret Williams married a William Williams in 1822. Possibly this was Josiah's niece Margaret Clay Williams, born in 1802 to Robert and Esther; if so, he took his nephew by marriage into his business until March of 1825, when the partnership was dissolved (American Sentinel March 18, 1825 and Oct. 29, 1825). Williams sold the store to Christ Church (a frequent financer in this predominantly Episcopal neighborhood) who held it until 1831 when it was purchased by Middlesex County Bank (MLR 54:16 and 57:465).

Esther and John Williams, recipients of the older house, seem to have had six children between 1794 and 1805. Arthur Magill's 1812 distribution made no mention of John Williams; he was not even a witness, like Samuel Williams who later married Martha Magill, another sister. John Williams was probably dead (or in his father-in-law's extreme disfavor) by 1812. Esther Williams lived here until 1835 when she sold the house to attorney Jonathan Barnes (MLR 64:245)
Three gambrel-roofed shops

The next structure illustrated by Barnum appears to be a trio of joined, 1½ story, gable-to-street, gambrel-roofed buildings, seemingly little shops with central entry doors flanked by windows. They presented the largest research problem of this project. Despite their joined appearance it seems that the north one was part of the Magill property and the other two were part of the next property south. Magill's will left something south of Esther Williams to Arthur W. Magill, his son, and indeed there was a store on the property Magill had purchased from Philips. An 1801 deed (MLR 36:308) indicated the presence of Philips store near the southern edge of his property. In 1804 (MLR 37:344) Magill deeded this store to his son and son-in-law (Josiah Williams). The Bank of the United States existed in Middletown from 1817 to 1830, and was located in Josiah Williams 3-story brick building "lately" in early 1825 (MLR 54:16). Therefore, in 1825 it was somewhere else. A mortgage from 1829 (MLR 58:180) and a deed from 1832 (MLR 59:539) suggest that the Bank was in the northernmost small gambrel roofed building in 1825; perhaps the switch was an economy move. Arthur W. Magill was a bonded cashier for the Bank. Financial indiscretions on his part caused the Bank to take him to the Supreme Court and confiscate his assets (Middletown, Connecticut...form 75)

The two other stores were part of a property long owned by Giles Hall, a shipmaster in the late 18th century. It is probably impossible to determine when the two little shops appeared on the property. The house to the south predates the 1730's (MLR 1:326); in 1749, Giles Hall Jr. (born at the present 643 Main Street, Portland, Conn.) acquired the house and a quarter acre. It may be coincidence, but Hall's mother was the former Esther Hamlin, and the southern half of this block was the Hamlin lot in 1657 (MLR 1:22). Possibly young Giles was living near his cousin Charles Hamlin who had a house on Elm Street on the other side of the block. In 1809 his heirs sold the house and a store to John Hinsdale (MLR 39:283 and 41:177-79). Hinsdale modified the property very little; possibly the little gambrel-roofed buildings are later
shops than Giles Hall's "store." A map filed in the Middletown Town Clerk's office offers some insight: dated May 1829, it offers scale drawings and dimensions for the corner of Court and Main, all of which was eventually acquired by Hinsdale. Only two store buildings are included at this location; the north one, 18' x 24', and the next one south, 20' x 29'. They do not reflect the same uniformity which Barnum suggests; they are not even joined. Apparently in 1825 they were ordinary small stores; Joseph Chittenden and William Platts took out a liquor license for a store in this vicinity (Liquor License Book, Middletown Town Clerk). If both stores were not occupied by a tavern-type business, ads from the period suggest a high probability that the remaining building served as what we would identify as a general store, selling a variety of merchandise determined by what was available from local sources and from the river trade. Few stores seem to have specialized in one general category of merchandise. The two south stores from the gambrel-roofed trio were sold from the Hinsdale estate in 1832 to George Penney (MLR 59:539). In the 1840 Census, Penney was listed as a black male, no occupation listed, between the ages of 36 and 55, with nine other members in his family. On the 1835 tax list he owned one $700 store (there was always confusion as to whether this building was one or two stores) and his own $550 dwelling house.

John Hinsdale

The Giles Hall house, if the original wasn't replaced after deliberate or accidental destruction, was at least a hundred years old as Barnum drafted up his map. Its central chimney is an indication of an early construction date, although the four bay facade is uncommon for an early 18th century house. In the period 1814-1816, John Hinsdale lived in this house (Liquor License Book). Hinsdale and his brother Daniel owned and/or operated a store, a comb-and-button manufactory, and possibly several other enterprises aside from the large store just south of the Giles Hall house. Hinsdale is difficult to trace through church and vital records; several are mentioned in Hartford Vital Records, including brothers John and Daniel born in 1706 and 1708, which at least suggests
that the Hartford family may have used "John" and "Daniel" as family names. John apparently married Elizabeth Wetmore of Middletown in 1804. Ichabod Wetmore, possibly Elizabeth's father, deeded Hinsdale half his homelot the following year (MLR 37:404). Christ Church records indicate a Hinsdale daughter baptized in 1805 and a son and another daughter baptized in 1808; the latter may have been twins. Elizabeth Wetmore Hinsdale died October 25, 1808, twenty-four years old. Two years later Hinsdale married Harriet Johnson, this time in the First Congregational Church, and had another son and two more daughters. Hinsdale's move to the congregational Church suggests that either his or his second wife's background was "old line," rooted in the original faith of the settlement, Congregationalism. Or perhaps it was a social move on Hinsdale's part to place himself within the old elite of the community. In 1809 Hinsdale, with some assistance from his brother Daniel, acquired nearly the entire corner of Main and Court Streets. By 1811 he had built the eight unit, 3 story commercial building which rounds the corner on the Barnum map. Apparently he vacated Wetmore's land after his first wife's death, and possibly moved into this house to conserve his assets in order to build the commercial building. Otherwise it would seem odd for so successful a man to be living in such an old house. The 1829 surveyors map shows a "Back Store" on the Giles Hall house, extending from the summer kitchen ell. Located between "Mrs Williams Barn" and the Hall house barn, it is 37½ x 43½ feet and accessible by a 10' wide passageway. Probably some less attractive business like horseshoeing went on in the back building. Also of note, a narrow covered passageway links the outhouse to the kitchen ell, in the interests of modesty and warmth. Perhaps the Hinsdales were comfortable here after all, even into 1825. In May of 1825 Hinsdale helped to found the Middletown Savings Bank and served as its first president. Hinsdale was always heavily mortgaged—MLR 44:136 lists over thirty grantees as creditors in a mortgage for $50,000—so perhaps he never moved out of this house until he left Middletown, which had happened by 1827 (MLR 54:442)—"John Hinsdale, at present
residing in New Haven." Both Hinsdales turned over their property to a firm of lawyers from the New London area in 1828 (MLR 57:73) and it was all sold off in 1832 as the "estate" of John and Daniel Hinsdale, although there was no indication of their demise. More likely the word "estate" was used in the sense of the estate of the insolvent debtor. (One deed referred to duties on goods owed to the New London Customs House by the Hinsdales—MLR 54:442.) Luke C. Lyman, a bookstore owner, purchased the house from the Hinsdale estate in 1832.

"The Hinsdale Mall"

The next building initially posed the greatest research problem, in that it was not named on either the 1859 Walling map or the 1851 Clark map. The building itself, 3 stories high with ten doors on Main Street (according to Barnum) and two stories on Court Street with two entry doors, no longer exists due to a fire in 1941 (Postcard at G.M.P.T.). However, MLR 63:8 mentioned a map filed with the town clerk which—on microfilm—still remains, 150 years later. The Hinsdales' commercial building, along with the houses, barns, and outhouses they had acquired at Main and Court, are diagrammed to scale by a surveyor named Griswold. Four feet south of the Hall house is a 44' x 40' "store" labeled #8 and #7, although there is no indication of a partition. Possibly the renter used both sides, or perhaps one store was on a lower floor and one on an upper floor. Adjoining 8 and 7 is the 29½' x 40' brick store owned by Charles Brewer, the one small area never owned by the Hinsdales. South of Brewer's is #6 (16' x 40'), #5 (16'4" x 40') and #4 at the corner, divided (16' x 28' and 12' x 28' by a partition, but not numbered separately, an equal but opposite enigma to #8 and #7. On Court Street is #3 (20' x 40'), #2 (19'5" x 40'), and #1 (18'6" x 40'). An 1891 photograph from the files of the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust shows what the Hinsdale building probably looked like; it is included (photostatted) on the following page.
The McKee Drug building seems to contain the most original styling. Its Federal chimneys still rise from each corner of the gable roof. Flared stone lintels top the windows, a common feature in Middletown's old brick buildings. The Willis Photographer and Caulkins and Post to the north are similar; however the Caulkins and Post Furniture Rooms building to the south, flush with its neighbors on the 1829 surveyor's map, extends forward by several feet, giving the impression of a flat roof, popular in the mid to late 19th century.

Perhaps a solid month spent reading the Middlesex Gazette and the American Sentinel would reveal exactly who was located where in 1825 (which seemed, at a superficial examination, to be a year of greater than average business openings and closings). However, examination of the leases in the early 1800's reveals what types of businesses might have existed in 1825.

The leases and various items from the Middlesex Gazette suggest that John Hinsdale built the Main Street section of his brick building around 1811, when in its November 23rd edition, the Middlesex Gazette announced its removal to "Mr. Hinsdale's new brick building a few rods north of the Post Office."

Epaphras Clark took out a lease—at $95 a year, $32.50 in cash and the balance in office supplies—in the "new Brick store" in 1812 (Mar 39:531). He was
to occupy the "store and counting room" on the "south part"—another indication that the east wing did not exist at this time. Epaphras Clark and Luke C. Lyman, book sellers, book binders and printers, printed David Dudley Field's Statistical Account of Middlesex County in 1819, quite possibly in Hinsdales' building. An ad from the American Sentinel from June 18, 1823 places E. and H. Clark (Epaphras and Horace) in store #6.

By 1814 the Hinsdales were using the term "new building" for the Court Street brick store, John Southmayd held one lease (MLR 44:136); class research on the 1835 tax list identified Southmayd as a cabinet, furniture, and coffin maker. Jonathan Bill held another five-year lease, for a store which Hinsdales agreed to complete with a hoisting wheel and hatchway to accommodate Bill's grocery business (MLR 44:158). A similar arrangement was made for Ichabod Wetmore, another grocer (MLR 44:136). In 1816, Edmund Hughes, a jeweler, was given a lease for the corner store formerly occupied by Rensalaer Rose, a hatter (MLR 49:147). When his lease was renewed in 1822, specifics of his business were alluded to; he was given permission to put a forge or a goldsmith's furnace on one story of the shop, provided he notify the Hinsdales if he removed it, so that they could lower their insurance coverage. He was also required to do no "manufacture requiring fire heat" in any other story or room except where the furnace was. The lease also mentioned an upper chamber "lately occupied by J.(or I.)B.G. Brainerd Esq. as an Attorney's office." Charles Dyer probably occupied a store here also, since he eventually bought store #6 in 1832 (MLR 59:453). He did a lively business as a druggist for many years before that, as evidenced by his ads in the Sentinel and the Gazette. Unfortunately his lease did not appear among the ones filed in Land Records. The Middlesex Gazette of April 7, 1824 also advertised a store in Hinsdales' complex for rent, "formerly of Angel Bario as a grocery and recently by Mr. William B. Hall as a Crockery Store. It seems that William B. Hall, who lived next door to the Baptist Church on South Main Street, had died. Most likely two or three businesses occupied each unit; six 1825 liquor licenses were held by people who probably operated in Hinsdales' building that year.
Colonial rental property

The next building on Barnum's map, directly over the "C" in Court Street, is a 5-bay, two story central chimney Colonial house, an indication that it stretches back to the 18th century. It is probably the ca. 1740 Col. Matthew Talcott house although its positioning is curious, facing onto Court Street. In 1836 Joseph Barratt, a Middletown doctor, drew a map of Main Street as he remembered it from the 1770's (Barbour, J.W., Connecticut Historical Collections, p. 508. Beers' History of Middlesex County shows a similar sketch with the same names, dated 1790-1800, probably not correct.) Barratt's map, reputed to be inaccurate, shows five houses in the stretch of Main Street we have just covered: Jacob Sebor's, James Cornell's (Dr. Osborn's), George Phillips' (Esther Williams'), Giles Hall's (John Hinsdale's), and Col. Matthew Talcott's. Each of Barratt's little squares sits at the edge of Main Street. By 1825 Hinsdale's #4 and #5 stores occupied the spot where Barratt would have us believe Talcott's house stood. Barratt may have been wrong. When Talcott bought his lot from Charles Hamlin in 1740, it extended 9 1/2 rods, or 156 and 3/4 feet, back from Main Street. The 1829 surveyor's map shows that the supposed Talcott house is 93'7" to 134'2" from Main Street (the west and the east walls, respectively). Therefore the house in question would have fit on Talcott's property. Why he would build toward Court Street remains a mystery unless he chose to face the south for reasons of warmth previously discussed. The name applied to Court Street on the Barratt map offers another, albeit flimsy, clue: "Talcott's Lane," i.e., the lane which runs past Talcott's house. His deed required him to keep this "passway" open. (This deed, MLR 9:84, also serves to explain one curious phenomenon on the 1825 map: Talcott was permitted to keep a cellar drain through the north side of Hamlin's property. This drain would probably be the apparent stream running from the north corner of the Hinsdale building across the block to the river. It is cited as a boundary in later transactions involving the Talcott house, e.g. MLR 61: 152.)
Another vague possibility exists concerning the Talcott house: it could have been moved back from Main Street, partially accounting for the two-year delay in the construction of Hinsdale's Court Street stores. Whatever the case Barnum seems to be trying to convey the styling of an Ipd house. The 1829 map offers more information: the floor dimensions on the Talcott house are \( 40'2'' \times 47'\frac{1}{2}'' \). The standard Colonial house maintains a 3 to 2 ratio between width and depth. Therefore the Talcott house almost certainly displayed a rear addition of some sort. It may even have been a "salt box" shape, given that it is deeper than it is wide. Apparently it was a large house, probably used as rental property in 1825. It may have accommodated more than one family connected either with the commercial area or the Middletown Wollen Manufacturing Company across the block (Conescu, Rachel. unpublished paper) In 1832, it was purchased by Randolph Pease.

**Federal Rental Property**

The next house east of the Talcott house is clearly a classic 3-bay, 2\( \frac{1}{2} \) story gable-to-street Federal style graced with a gable fanlight. Hinsdales almost certainly had this house built since stylistically it could not have predated their 1812 purchase of the property. Perhaps in the early 1820's they felt that their venture with the commercial building was doing well enough that one or the other deserved a fashionable new house. Perhaps John Hinsdale himself moved here from the old Giles Hall house. Daniel was elected Treasurer of the Hartford Second Church in 1824 (Hartford Second Church records) so it seems unlikely that he would be living in Middletown. If the house was used as rental property however, it might be the one vacated by a "Mrs. Davidson" in 1823 (Middlesex Gazette March 26) since its 22'x39'\( \frac{1}{2} \) dimensions (1829 map) would be better suited to a theoretical widow than the immense Talcott house. The Federal style house was bought by Stephen Crittenden, a merchant who also purchased one of the Hinsdale stores that same year (1832). By 1842 a "nine pin alley" owned by Chauncey Wright was located on the property behind this pretty little house. (MLR 66:531)
Samuel Cooper

The name Cooper appears directly and indirectly in the stories of most of the rest of the houses on Court Street. Samuel Cooper (1781-1863) probably lived in the house with the ell (between the "O" and the "U" in "Court") in 1825. The house is hard to interpret in Barnum's picture. If it is a gable-to-street Federal, the door should be on the first or the third bay; if it is a Colonial, it is hard to explain why it is situated perpendicular to Court Street, facing east. Even more curious is the round arched "garage" type door on the ell; it would seem that some sort of shop operates from this house. Unfortunately the research was hindered by the fact that several volumes of land records were out being rebound. Lamberton Cooper (1745-1816) whose inventory suggests that he might have been a baker (MPR 11:165) occupied this property by 1767 (MLR 21:120). It is likely that he received it from Matthew Talcott not long before, as Talcott had been appointed his guardian in 1758 and Cooper turned twenty one in 1766. (This clear, if hypothetical, picture is marred by the fact that some abutting properties--MLR 19:391 for example--placed Timothy Bigelow on this land. However, both Bigelow's wife and young Lamberton's mother were Clarks--could Cooper's "Uncle Timothy" have held legal title in trust for the youth? The return of the missing volumes would probably answer such questions.) Lamberton Cooper's estate designated this house as his homestead, and it went to his younger son Samuel in 1816. Samuel married Hannah Cushing Bowers in 1805 and they had nine children. A two-year-old daughter died in 1815, and fifteen year old Margaret had died two years before Barnum drew his map; 1825 found the Coopers with girls ages 4, 7, 8, and 14, and boys 2, 15, and 19. The nineteen year old may have already "gone to sea"--Cooper was active in the West Indies trade, as evidenced by an 1818 notice in the Middlesex Gazette. In 1826 this boy died "in Buenos Ayres." (MVR) Four years later the fifteen yearold son of 1825 died "at New Orleans." Two sisters married, two remained single and the littlest boy grew up to become a lawyer in Brooklyn. (MLR 95 :67-70). Samuel Cooper served as a warden in
the Episcopal Church and was one of the founding members of the first Mattabassett Fire Company in 1803 (Beers, op. cit., p. 90). He held this house until 1833 when he probably moved three buildings east on Court Street.

Carrington's Brick Store

Next to Cooper's house was a 2½ story brick store (MLR 72:446) almost certainly run by Henry Carrington, who merchandised West Indies goods with Samuel Cooper (Middlesex Gazette, 1818). In 1825 Carrington, who lived in the house just east of this store (MLR 43:353) served as Selectman and Assessor (TYFR 3:251 and 254). The same year he also lost his wife Susannah, the daughter of arms manufacturer Nathan Starr. Married since 1806, they had daughters 18 and 14, and a 10 year old son. Interestingly, this information is found in the First Congregational Church records, rather than the Episcopal records, indicating that the Carringtons were Congregationalists. One of their daughters married a Dunbar Smith Dyson in the Episcopal Church, however, (1838) and their son had his three daughters baptized there in 1855.

Henry Carrington

Henry Carrington's house (between the "R" and the "T" of "Court") must have looked very much like the General Mansfield House on Main Street. It was a two story, 5-bay, ridge-to-street Federal style with four end chimneys and an apparently elaborate door surround. A summer kitchen with tall chimney projected from the west end. Barnum seems to suggest that this elegant brick structure was a bit further back from the street than its neighbors. A ca. 1765 house probably disappeared from the property in the early 1800's (the Mansfield house was built in 1810). Possibly Carrington had the house built for himself (with the help of his prosperous father-in-law?) because he bought the property for $1650 in 1812 and sold it in 1836 for $7850 (MLR 43:353 and 67:30), nearly five times the purchase price. Carrington sold the property to Samuel Cooper who divided it to sell it to various individuals (publisher William D. Starr bought the house) in 1843 (MLR 72:256 and 446). In the interests of progress, Carrington's gracious brick Federal house
house has been swallowed by the Rita Girl office, or the Sons of Italy hall, or the driveway between them.

Dr. Henry Woodward

The next house east of Carrington's may have been built by William Walter Parsons around 1790 (MLR 28:154). Parsons was Samuel Cooper's wife's uncle. Perhaps this house best illustrates the family connections which linked early neighborhoods; George Philips (1719 to ca. 1790), the father of the George Philips on Main Street, is the key. Philips had six children, sons, George and Thompson, and daughters Hannah, Hope, Esther and Margaret. William Parsons was the husband of Phillips daughter Esther. (Incidentally, he bought the property from the estate of Charles Hamlin, and Philips wife Esther was probably a Hamlin according to the G.M.P.T. Middletown survey, form 286). Apparently Parsons died between 1792 and 1806, the year that Esther and her new husband William Jackson, living in Plymouth, Massachusetts, deeded the house to Samuel Cooper (MLR 39:66). Cooper was married to the daughter of Philips daughter Margaret. Probably Cooper lived here after his 1805 marriage until his father's death, when he inherited that house (west of the Carrington property). Once again missing volumes 52 and 56 of the land records would offer a great deal of information: in MLR 52:178 Cooper deeded something to Henry Bowers, probably one of his wife's brothers. In MLR 56:250, Bowers deeded something to Margaret Bowers, almost certainly Cooper's mother-in-law. Both properties are described in the index as "Court Street." By 1832, (MLR 59:498 and 499), Lloyd Bowers of Pomfret, Ct. and William Cushing Bowers of New Orleans, La. quit-claimed this property, "the late residence of my honored mother now deceased" to their sister, Hannah Cushing Cooper, Samuel's wife and old George Philips' granddaughter. Therefore the Cooper-to-Bowers and Bowers-to-Bowers transactions most likely involve the same half acre. However, Margaret Bowers was probably not living here in 1825—an advertisement in the April 7, 1824 Middlesex Gazette announces that "Dr. Woodward Has removed to the House recently occupied by Capt. Henry Bowers in Court Street." Dr. Woodward may have been Dr. Henry
Woodward (Christ Church records). Born in 1795, he came from Wethersfield to marry Mary Henderson of Middletown in 1821. In 1832 he died leaving four small daughters (a four-day-old son had died in 1829). About that time the Bowers brothers turned over the property to their sister Hannah Cooper, who apparently moved into the house with her husband and four remaining children. (The two sailor boys were now dead and the two girls were married.) Hannah died in 1840, but Samuel lived there until his death in 1863.

If the genealogy connected with this house is rich with information, the Barnum sketch is not. The house looks like a general store in a wild west movie—gable to street, 2½ story with a wraparound porch for the cowboys to stand, thumbs in pockets, and watch the gunfights in the street. Closer inspection reveals a five bay facade at the first story level, or shed ells on the east and west wall. A 1790 house would generally have a ridge-to-street gable roof or a hip roof; no definite explanation for the shape of this building has been uncovered.

Luke C. Lyman

The next house, on the northwest corner of Court and Elm Streets, gives the appearance of being an 18th century Colonial house, largely because of its center chimney. Missing MLR volume 32 holds a deed which probably tells us if there was a house on the property around 1795. If there was, it could have been built by George Philips or Lamberton Cooper (MLR 28:293 and 23:327) in the early 1790's. A 1789 lease (MLR 28:256) implies that the house belonged to Charles (1707-1781) and Anne (1710-1788) Hamlin, although MLR 28:292 suggests that their house was more likely the two story 3-bay Colonial at the bend of Elm Street. If the missing deed contains no mention of a house then possibly the house was built around 1811 by William Scovel, a merchant specializing in lumber. (MLR 43:105 and 268) Barnum's picture suggests an older house, however. Scovel remained continually mortgaged until Epaphras Clark and Luke C. Lyman (printers of D.D.Fields 1819 Statistical Account of Middlesex County) finally received the property from Samuel Cooper and Henry Carrington, probably
acting on behalf of Scovel's creditors (MLR 46:353). Lyman wound up with the house in 1830 (an 1824 mortgage which might clarify ownership is at the binders) so it is reasonable to assume he was living there in 1825. He mortgaged the house in 1842 to Samuel Russell who eventually acquired and sold it (MLR 66: 537 and 75:528).

Jennet Riley Cooper

On the opposite corner of Elm Street from Luke Lyman's house was another Cooper house, lived in by the widow and twenty-year-old daughter of William Cooper, Samuel's brother. A twenty-two-year-old son may have lived elsewhere, possibly on shipboard like his young cousins. William Cooper (1776-1820) was a grocer. His ad in the 1810 Middlesex Gazette offered "Cognac, rum, molasses, lump & brown sugar, gin, sherry, lisbon wine, claret, tea, cod fish, salt, soap, rice, paint & oil, beans, ham, pork, tar, pitch, rosin, iron, ship timber, and oak plank" and he offered to pay cash for 300 ship knees (angled wood pieces used in shipbuilding). Cooper married Jennet or Janette Riley in 1802, probably taking up residence in this house at that time. His father Lamberton had owned it since 1793 (MLR 30:310). William and Jennet had a son, William B. in 1803, and a daughter, Jane Riley, in 1805. In 1816 Lamberton Cooper died, leaving William this house, "occupied by William" (MPR 10:442). He survived his father by only four years, however, and the house passed to his widow.

On the 1851 and 1859 maps "Miss Cooper"—daughter Jane—lived in this house or a newer one nearby, and on the 1874 Beers Atlas map, the property is labelled "Cooper est." MLR 95:659 suggests that Williams grandchildren and great-grandchildren in New York had no particular interest in the old house.

This house was actually the Capt. Samuel Willis house, built around 1743 on Hamlin land which stretched to the river. The house seems to be a large 2½ story gambrel, facing either Elm Street, or possibly the River. The house currently located at 49 Main Street, the coral-colored gambrel-roofed one of John Reynolds III's three restored houses, is probably a good approximation of the Willis house
as it looked in the 18th and early 19th century. When Willis died about 1788, his
two sons, one in Bath, North Carolina and one in Kingston, Jamaica, sold the
property to Lemuel Storrs, provided he pay a 100 pound legacy to Sarah Hubbard,
the young daughter of wealthy Nehemiah Hubbard Jr., and Willis' granddaughter.
(MLR 30:219) Storrs was also active in land sales in Ohio as evidenced by
an ad in the Nov. 30, 1809 Middlesex Gazette. It was Storrs who sold the Willis
house to Lamberton Cooper in 1793.

SUMMARY

The streetscape of these two bits of Main and Court Street represents
a halfway point between Middletown as Mr. Cornwell and Mr. Hamlin saw it and
Middletown's Main Street as we know it. In 1657 Cornwell and Hamlin were the
only two to own this land, in relatively small, approximately 5 acre houselots.
On the 1825 map there are still private residences, eleven in fact. Then there
are the small shops which sprang up beside the houses—George Philips', Giles
Hall's, the round arched "garage" built onto Samuel Cooper's house—the
embryo of the commercial development. But the Hinsdales' building probably
changed the concept of a store for many Middletown residents. Here was a building
much like the ones which still stand on northern Main Street, a concentration
of merchants and merchandise with no houses, a veritable mall. Josiah Williams'
and Henry Carrington's stores were probably similar but not as extensive.
If indeed our class did find a decrease in advertising in the 1830's, perhaps
it could be accounted for by the fact that stores were no longer spread out
from home lot to home lot. To illustrate: an interior decorator working out
of his house would have to advertise regularly just to let people know that
he existed. A decorator with a small shop in Meriden Square could count on
a good deal of walk-in trade; he would only need to advertise occasionally.

A physical reminder of the changing times would be the extensive use of
brick in the new buildings. Wood and brick buildings now alternated, in
twos and threes, down the street. The contrast between Hinsdales' 3 story
brick and a six flat store two is striking.
brick building and the tiny one-story gambrel-roofed shops must have been
tremendously impressive to Middletown's citizenry. One ad in the 1815 Middlesex
Gazette located a shop for sale or rent as "opposite the south wing of Hinsdale's
elegant block." Surely this was the earmark of a real city. Unfortunately
for the Hinsdales, they seem to have emerged from their progressive undertaking
as debtors.

Another metamorphosis within the community became obvious in doing the
church record genealogical research: most of these people were affiliated with
the Episcopal church. A generation or two previous the residents had been
Congregationalists. Philips and Hamlin baptisms, marriages, and funerals were
recorded by the First Congregational Church; Cooper, Williams, Woodward, Magill—
all these were listed in Christ Church records. Curiously, Dr. John Osborn
(ca. 1740 to 1825) was listed, with the 1770 to 1790 births of his children,
in Christ Church records. Even his father's 1753 burial was listed there.
The Episcopal Church existed in Middletown at that time but the majority of
the people were Congregationalists. Osborn seems to have been a reader and
a thinker and an individualist. On the other end of the scale was selectman
Henry Carrington, a Congregationalist, whether still affiliated or trying to
be affiliated with the old hierarchy. By the next generation the Carringtons
seemed to be affiliated with Christ Church, whether from sheer conformity,
or from intermarriage with the surrounding Episcopalians. But the overall
shift of the community to Christ Church signifies that changes were occurring
not only in the landscape but in the reigning families. The old Congregational
families were dying out and a new group, from a different background was taking
control, or perhaps more accurately stated, they were setting up a new lifestyle
of which they would be in charge.

According to Beers History of Middlesex County (p. 86), the summer of 1825 was
marked by an epidemic of "spotted fever or sinking typhus." The four deaths
recorded for this small area included Dr. Osborn in June, Epaphras Clark's
infant child on August 6th, Charles Dyer's twenty-three year old wife Mary Ann
on August 31st, and Susannah Starr Carrington on September 7th. There seems to be no record of the cause of their deaths, but they do seem to cluster around the summer months.

The demise of the buildings in this area would require another paper the size of this one to chronicle and explain. In brief, the commercialization of the area, which the Hinsdales firmly established, continued. Residential structures disappeared to make room for more two-, three-, and four-story business buildings, until those were the only type of structure in the area. Probably the last survivors from Barnum's map were the Hinsdale buildings, which suffered extensive damage in a fire in August, 1941.

*Main and Court Street Fire Ruins, August, 1941*

Driving north on Main Street, one can see an old brick wall rising above the one-story shops on the corner, part of the building currently occupied by Nino's Pizza. Quite likely this is a former part of Hinsdales' or Brewer's store. The cellars of Bernie Fields or Regal's may well reveal early 19th century construction. The alleys and back yards of the corner stores display features with which Samuel, or even Lamberton Cooper may have been familiar. But the information assembled here has no place remaining to which we can point while we tell
the story—no house to plaque, no National Register Nomination to seek—so
the stories have come together for this moment and now disappear, seemingly
irrelevant, like people in unmarked graves.

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